

# Feds looking to help small businesses here

## Special to the Courier

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) recently urged small businesses in Georgia to submit applications to participate in the agency's new HUBZone Empowerment contracting program.

"This program can help open the doors of opportunity for small businesses in many locations throughout our state," said Charles Anderson, director of the SBA Georgia District.

"I encourage small business owners to register by going on the agency's web site (at [www.sba.gov/hub-zone](http://www.sba.gov/hub-zone)) or by contacting our district office in Atlanta at 504-347-4147, ext. 118."

That web site shows that much of Liberty County qualifies as a HUBZone.

A HUBZone is a Historically Underutilized Business

Zone, and the program will provide contracting benefits to small business located in those areas.

Potential applicants can determine if their company is located within a HUBZone by using the web site's mapping system.

"We're very excited about our state of the art mapping on the web site that will quickly tell applicants whether this program will help them," said Michael McHale, acting program manager for HUBZone.

In addition to using the electronic application on the HUBZone site, applicants can submit a paper application to SBA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The paper version can be downloaded from the web or picked up from any SBA district office.

McHale said the first-year goal of the program is to

channel at least one percent of overall federal procurement to HUBZone small businesses, which at current federal spending levels equates to about \$2 billion in contracts.

By year 2003 that goal rises to its maximum level of three percent, which translates to about \$6 billion.

To participate in the program, a small businesses principal office must be located within a HUBZone.

More than 7,000 urban census tracts and 900 mostly rural counties qualify as HUBZones.

All federally recognized Native American reservations also qualify.

In addition, 35 percent of a participating firm's workforce must live within the HUBZone location.

A qualified company must be owned and operated by U.S. citizens.